

February 4, 2013

Dear Colleague:

We are writing you to invite you to be an original co-sponsor of the Protect Our Prairies Act of 2013, which is estimated to save taxpayers nearly \$200 million over 10 years. This legislation is a commonsense approach to conservation that aims to protect America's native grassland and the wildlife that depends on these lands for survival. Co-sponsorship of this "sodsaver" legislation will help ensure its inclusion in the upcoming Farm Bill. **This language is identical to H.R. 5879, the Protect our Prairies Act of 2012, which had broad bipartisan support and was partially included in the Federal Agriculture and Risk Management Act (FARRM) of 2012.**

Native grasslands, wetlands, and prairie provide grazing land for livestock and are essential habitats for a number of wildlife species, including pheasants and waterfowl. The hunting and fishing industries depend on unspoiled grasslands to continue providing pristine habitats for game. According to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, hunting and fishing has a national impact of over \$190 billion annually, supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Grasslands converted to crop production are significantly less productive during their first several years of use compared to land that has been cropped for years. Making crop insurance assistance proportionate to the reduced production capability of this land just makes sense. This bill takes that into account by providing less crop insurance subsidies on native grasslands converted to cropland for the first four years of production.

The Protect Our Prairies Act takes a different approach than the sodsaver provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill. Specifically, this bill discourages the conversion of native sod to cropland by:

- Limiting crop insurance coverage to 65 percent of the applicable T-Yield until the acreage has four years of crop production.
- Limiting the premium subsidy to 50 percentage points less than the premium subsidy that would otherwise be available, until the acreage has four years of crop production.
- Making the acreage ineligible for yield substitution meaning a farmer cannot apply the yield from high producing land to the newly converted cropland.

This bill encourages good farming practices while allowing producers from making their own planting decisions. Protect our Prairies is a common sense solution to conserve wildlife habitats, save taxpayer dollars, and support the hunting and fishing industries that are an integral part of our nation's economy.

If you have any additional questions or would like to co-sponsor, please contact Renee Latterell ([renee.latterell@mail.house.gov](mailto:renee.latterell@mail.house.gov) or 5-2801) with Rep. Kristi Noem or Randolph Briley ([randolph.briley@mail.house.gov](mailto:randolph.briley@mail.house.gov) or 5-2472) with Rep. Tim Walz.

Sincerely,

Kristi Noem  
Member of Congress

Tim Walz  
Member of Congress